



Journal of Alpine Research | Revue de géographie alpine

104-1 | 2016

Montagnes et conflictualité : le conflit, facteur d'adaptations et d'innovations territoriales

La Frichelette of Thônes. War, Memory and Territorial Identity in Aravis from 1793 to the Age of Internet

Franck Roubeau

Translator: Harry Forster



Electronic version

URL: <http://journals.openedition.org/rga/3238>

DOI: 10.4000/rga.3238

ISSN: 1760-7426

Publisher:

Association pour la diffusion de la recherche alpine, UGA Éditions/Université Grenoble Alpes

Electronic reference

Franck Roubeau, « La Frichelette of Thônes. War, Memory and Territorial Identity in Aravis from 1793 to the Age of Internet », *Journal of Alpine Research | Revue de géographie alpine* [Online], 104-1 | 2016, Online since 12 May 2016, connection on 10 December 2020. URL : <http://journals.openedition.org/rga/3238> ; DOI : <https://doi.org/10.4000/rga.3238>

This text was automatically generated on 10 December 2020.



La Revue de Géographie Alpine est mise à disposition selon les termes de la licence Creative Commons Attribution - Pas d'Utilisation Commerciale - Pas de Modification 4.0 International.

La Frichelette of Thônes. War, Memory and Territorial Identity in Aravis from 1793 to the Age of Internet

Franck Roubeau

Translation : Harry Forster

- 1 Between 4 and 10 May 1793 the area round Thônes, now in Haute-Savoie, came out in revolt against the revolutionary authorities, in the recently established *département* of Mont Blanc¹. Local people were angry about several of the new government's demands, primarily the civil constitution of the clergy, demands for men and goods. Government forces soon gained the upper hand and the subsequent repression was harsh, leaving 90 dead and many injured, with parishes sacked and fined a total of 40,000 livres. This did irreparable damage. The conciliatory support in autumn 1792 for the new Republic and its bill of human rights turned into deep-rooted hostility towards the revolutionary government, in particular its policy on religion. It was a shock, in the sense of the concept proposed and tested by historian Michel Lagrée and those who attended the symposium Chocs et Ruptures en Histoire Religieuse. Before 1793 tridentine Catholicism was vigorous but largely featureless. Henceforth it hardened, adopting a strong, intransigent identity. This small corner of the French Alps became a stronghold of political and religious conservatism, a situation which persisted until the late-20th century.
- 2 The 'little war' at Thônes thus gave rise to very sensitive local memories, repeatedly stirred up by political turmoil during the 19th century and constantly nurtured by a tradition of history-writing heavily influenced by the clergy, which took shape after 1850 and is still in evidence to this day on Wikipedia. A key figure in this historical account was Marguerite Frichelet-Avet, also known as La Frichelette. She took part in the rioting and was shot dead on 18 May 1793, aged 37. After her death she became a local figure, halfway between the 'classical' *ancien régime* rioter and a woman up in arms. She was, it seems, the body and soul of the uprising, stirring up support, supplying and even leading the combat

of the Thônes rebels². She was captured by the authorities, tried in Annecy and sentenced to death, accused by the prosecution of having ‘contributed to provoking and maintaining the gathering of insurgents, either by sounding the *tocsin* on 6, 7 and 8 May, or by dressing up in men’s clothes and marching armed with a musket and bayonet’³. She was duly executed on 18 May. She – and more largely Savoy’s Vendée-style uprising – gradually became the focus for a process of heritagization, which shaped then supported a strong, lasting territorial identity at the heart of what is now Haute Savoie. In what follows we propose, without any claim to exhausting the topic⁴, to examine the different ways this traumatic memory, faintly perceptible in the Aravis massif even now, has been portrayed and used.

- 3 During the 19th century the French Alps witnessed a boom in the local economy; at the same time the area became a tourist attraction (Guérin, 2007, pp. 144-146). Visitors no longer just passed through, they came to stay. Savoy, which became part of France in 1860⁵, had plenty of assets: mountains to climb, including of course majestic Mont Blanc; spas to stay at, not so much for one’s health as to be seen, particularly at Aix les Bains; good air to breathe and recover from noxious city vapours⁶. In this new summer playground, where one was as likely to meet good-looking athletes as chubby spa-goers, Thônes and its environs were not one of the most attractive spots, nor were they particularly busy. However, in travel logs such as the earliest guidebooks, it was suggested as a destination and readers, then as now, would discover a place of spectacular beauty and distinct identity (Bogey, 2009, pp. 659-662). The books which did more than simply describe the terrain and list amenities (the prices of hostelries, the times of coaches), seeking to provide a better understanding of the place, invariably mentioned the ‘little war’ of 1793 and its heroine Frichelette. Francis Wey (1812-82) was one of the authors who succeeded in nurturing both mind and body, so to speak, with an erudite book on Haute Savoie published in 1865. A sympathiser of the Chartist movement, he had been friends with Charles Nodier and the Romanticists. His visit to Aravis gave rise to this account of the ‘Thônes Vendée’.

‘Amidst the many valleys, twisting round the mountains like the narrow streets of a Gothic town, valleys leading to little market towns at the crossroads of busy networks, I sought in the area round Thônes the way into the Manigod valley, where the Fier rises. This too is the site of the Serraval defile which leads to Faverges. Countless names here, set down in local chronicles after the struggles of 1793, reminded me of the heroism of Marguerite Avet, linking a little known name to the figures of Joan of Arc and Cathelineau. She was a nun from Thônes, a very handsome woman aged 25 and teacher to the children of the little town. In spring 1793, when the Republican armies invaded the plains of Geneva, penetrating as far as Annecy and banning religious worship as they advanced, Marguerite took up the blue banner of the Annonciades and the white cross of Savoy. She was determined to stop the invasion as it entered the highlands. Both general and foot soldier, she stirred up the local people and led them out against the enemy’s forward positions, driving them back and capturing arms and artillery. On three occasions, in order to occupy the narrow mountain passes, she sallied forth, strengthening the forces she led. In the end she was defeated, taken prisoner and conveyed to Annecy. She faced down the revolutionary court with the dignity of a queen. Set before a firing squad on Place du Pâquier, she gave the order to shoot, accepting the deadly fire with a soldier’s valour. Marguerite Avet left a glorious name to the pretty town of Thônes, which now looks prosperous and modern (Wey, 1865)⁷.

- 4 The author who, in his preface, described himself as having ‘the best legs in contemporary literature’, invented nothing. Indeed there is every reason to suppose he

obtained his information in Thônes, probably from the church authorities there. It is worth noting his comparison with figures famous all over France and consequently familiar to a readership with a modicum of education: Joan of Arc, as a Roman Catholic warrior, and Cathelineau, of modest birth like Frichelet-Avet, to justify the connection with Vendée. Once introduced to travel literature, the story of La Frichelette became a permanent fixture. Indeed it reappeared with variations and additions⁸. Just a few years later it was cited in a book by the Dauphiné author Achille Raverat (1812-90). A member of the Académie Delphinale in Grenoble and Société Florimontane in Annecy, Raverat took his readers off on a walking tour of the northern part of the French Alps, in short one-day stages, well off the beaten track (Raverat, 1872, p. 6). This is what he had to say.

'The population of these valleys, for which Thônes was the main market town, displayed strong religious feeling. In 1793 they had been nicknamed the 'little Vendée', because, stirred up by non-juring priests, they sided with the Sardis, rising up against the Republican regime in the name of God and the King. The insurgents fortified the main roads into their locality and held out against troops sent from Annecy for several days. At Pont Saint Clair and Morette they halted the advance of General Donnaz and General D'Oraison. Having been routed, they fled into the mountains. Their leaders were rounded up and shot. Even the womenfolk encouraged the combatants. But above all a former nun, Marguerite Avet, also known as La Frichelette, distinguished herself for her energy, courage and heroism. Sentenced to be shot on Place du Pâquier, Annecy, she knelt and prayed in defiance of the firing squad' (Raverat, 1872, p. 142).

- 5 His account underlined the themes of Roman Catholic identity and political conservatism, and explicit comparisons with Vendée⁹. Associated with a female figure they gained substance, at a time when history, at least in the version reserved for schools and the general public, liked anecdotes, heroes and famous last words. For decades these rather black and white ideas prevailed as being self-evident.
- 6 But this certainly does not mean that visitors came, or would come, to Thônes and the surrounding area because of the revolutionary events and its heroine, in an early version of memorial tourism or because popular enthusiasm had 'canonized' Saint Frichelette (Lagrée-Roche, 1993). What happened in and around Thônes in 1793 was not comparable to events in Vendée. But for those who did come here, after touring the dairy cooperative and tasting some Reblochon (which features on an official tour of certified Savoy cheeses), and before going up to a resort, such as La Clusaz, there was a museum to be seen. At the time of writing it was being refurbished, but was scheduled to reopen in 2015¹⁰. Its story has yet to be written, always supposing the necessary records exist. We gathered some information on the website of Thônes local council¹¹, which gives an overall idea. François Cochat, a local scholar, established it in 1938 as part of the festivities to celebrate the centenary of the local fire service in 1936, local people having contributed various artefacts: weapons and tools, everyday implements and odd garments. The museum occupied two floors of a solidly built house in the centre of the village, but was damaged by German bombs in August 1944 and renovated in 1982. Prior to the recent alterations, its design was conventional and the museum devoted a showcase to the events of 1793. They were deemed to be of sufficient interest for a mid-20th century *Michelin Green guide* to suggest visiting the venue. Tourists might be interested to learn more about Thônes' past, in particular the 'Savoy Vendée' at the time of the French Revolution, but also the 'cherry orchard idyll', which Jean-Jacques Rousseau described in *Les Confessions*. The small town was described as a centre of local folklore (Guide vert Michelin, 1959, p. 170). The same description re-appeared, almost word-for-

word, in the 2006 edition of the same guidebook. How, we wonder, will the museum look after the alterations, now that there is much more public interest in the Great War than the French Revolution? However we may be certain that the brief but tragic events of the Savoy Vendée, with their heroine Marguerite Avet, were for a long time the most memorable, visible historical event in the area. Thônes itself still has a street named Marguerite Frichelet. But these events also left their mark on local politics.

- 7 Apart from being a key ingredient in local identity, the recollection of the events of 1793 in Thônes became a rallying cry for local politics in the second half of the 19th century, used every time that the community felt that its Roman Catholic identity was under threat. Annexation to France in 1860¹² was greeted with unanimous approval. Savoy left Piedmont without regret, the latter having made strenuous efforts to increase the control of central government during the previous decade (Rosa, 2003, pp. 986-87), and joined the authoritarian empire of Napoleon III, at a time when it was still on very good terms with Roman Catholic public opinion. But the secular policies of the Third Republic, after 1871, caused substantial unrest. Our purpose here is not to enter into the details of French history, when the 'godless' school system was established (in 1881-86) or when congregations were disbanded (in 1899-1904). We shall simply focus on the inventory crisis which followed the separation of church and state in December 1905 (Mayeur, 1966, pp. 1259-72; Mayeur, 2005). Work on making an inventory of Church property in each Aravis parish started at the end of January 1906. Things almost turned nasty on 29 January at Les Clefs. After singing hymns local people booed the tax inspector from the Enregistrement, Domaines and Timbre (registration, domains and stamp duty) department. The local press seized on the event, supporting or condemning it, depending on their political hue¹³. It was at this point that La Frichelette resurfaced, in a column in the weekly *Indicateur de la Savoie*¹⁴. The piece was purportedly a report on the discovery of a plot in the Thônes area against the Republic, stirred up by a motley group of culprits including free masons, the Pope and the Kaiser. It was penned by an anonymous civil servant¹⁵ and addressed to the Préfet of Haute Savoie. Its starting point was the assertion that in the future work on the inventory in neighbouring localities would be carried out under military protection.

'How can you entertain such an idea, Mister Prefect? Have you really thought this through? Would it be adequate? Do you really believe that a humble pot has gone missing in a couple of very reactionary localities in the canton of Thônes, as *Le Progrès* claims? No doubt, were you not newly appointed as Prefect, you might have been more wary of the horrible surprises that this clerical canton held in store (...) I am thus in a position, Mister Prefect, to certify to you that Thônes' battery of ancient cannons is now in position in those two very reactionary localities; indeed they are fully loaded; even if they are a little rusty and broken down, for, Mister Prefect, at the time of the Great Revolution, they were made of timber ringed with iron; they certainly look extremely fearsome. Indeed, one night as I was stealthily inspecting them, I spotted a mysterious shade lurking nearby, La Frigelette [sic], no doubt resuscitated because she was only half-shot by the Revolution. Nor is that all, Mr Prefect. Returning from my pious pilgrimage to the temple (...) at L'Allobrogie where I had the pleasure of shaking... your mallet, I was surprised to see mysterious, bulky parcels cluttering up the peaceful station at Thônes. (...) I was thus able to reveal a fearful clerical plot. I shudder to inform you, Mr Prefect, but the parcels, addressed to a couple of very reactionary localities, contained all the Church's canons [pun on cannons], melted down from the Council of Trent to the Vatican Council. Despatched by the Pope to Berlin, in order to help Wilhelm make war on us, they were diverted from their destination by clever reactionaries from the locality of Thônes, who will use them to crush the registration process. So

these, Mr Prefect, are the serious facts that as a loyal functionary I feel duty bound to reveal to you in the interests of our dear, tolerant Republic. This simple account will be sufficient to convince you; only mountain or campaign artillery or siege engines from Albertville or Grenoble will be enough to overcome all the forces of the reactionary coalition gathered in a couple of reactionary localities.' Signed: a foothill of La Tournette¹⁶.

- 8 By means of derision and imagination the author makes fun of the resources deployed¹⁷ to count crucifixes and oil cans, a view soon taken up by Clemenceau, who had the inventory suspended in March. But the text is also a warning, however exaggerated it may seem, with its reference to La Frichelette – even misspelt – indeed a veiled call for resistance. The whole thing is somewhat contradictory, the 1793 revolt having ended in tragedy and it being easier to stir up support with a past victory. However the important point was that more than just an inventory of liturgical material was at stake. As Christian Sorrel has pointed out, the motives for refusing to allow the inventory were neither exclusively political nor religious. The local congregation must certainly have thought some form of persecution was imminent. Families in the canton of Thônes, where memories of the 1793 uprising were still sore, had prayed every evening since the early 19th century that 'their priests never again should depart'. In standing up for the Roman Catholic church, local farmers were above all standing up for their church, the centre of community life, which the state and its city-dwelling representatives (tax inspectors and police) were threatening to remove. (...) Religious faith and conservative politics are two inseparable expressions of village identity (Palluel-Guillard, 1986, p. 319). However such things only go so far: the precedent of 1793 and the memory of Marguerite Frichelet-Avet were not enough to set light to Aravis. La Frichelette was a 'paper tiger'. In practice the 'soufflé' soon collapsed. The protests, restricted to the canton of Thônes, barely ruffled the surface of Haute Savoie as a whole. They concerned a few places in the Faucigny area, and around Cruseilles and Mégève, where they rang the church bells to warn of the imaginary onset of the 'infernal' republican columns. The real test came in the general election the following May. Rightwing parties suffered a serious setback, and the anti-clerical incumbent Léon Berthet (1861-1937) (Sorrel, 2009, p. 59) was re-elected. On the whole the people of Thônes did the 'right' thing, in keeping with the instructions issued by the bishop on 22 April, but their votes did not count for much in the Annecy constituency. It was not so much a case of other voters having given up their religion, rather they were 'universal suffrage Catholics', with minds of their own and quite capable of distinguishing the spiritual from the temporal. They saw separation of church and state as a fairly abstract judicial measure, posing no apparent threat to faith or the church: parish priests would not be thrown out, as the nuns had been in 1902 (Sorrel, 1995, p. 187). So was this the last time La Frichelette and the 1793 revolt would serve as political references? In the main France, after 1914, was less divided than before in its view of the revolutionary decade, apart from a few feverish outbursts (Michel Winock), at the time of the Cartel des Gauches, or lefts cartel, for example. This overall trend reflected the thorough groundwork done by the French Communist party (PCF) in 1934-47 to bring the French Revolution onboard (Andrieu, 2004, pp. 1083-1091; El-Gammal, 2008, pp. 63-71; Vovelle, 2010, pp. 701-704). But however antiquated they might seem, references to Savoy's 1793 revolt and its heroine persisted, surviving in a new form, as the subject of study by historians, geographers and political scientists.
- 9 We shall start by looking at history. During the second half of the 19th century local scholars took an interest in the 'little war' of Thônes. Significantly, a bishop of Annecy,

Monseigneur Claude Magnin (1802-79)¹⁸, wrote the first book exclusively devoted to the topic, initially published in serial form by the *Petit Savoisien* journal, then in a single volume in 1879 (Magnin, 1879). For many years this served as the work of reference in this field, even for anti-clerical authors. We have opted to take a closer look at another decisive publication, drafted by an important local personality, canon François Pochat-Baron (1860-1951)¹⁹. Locally born, he was a former pupil, teacher and finally headmaster of St Joseph's²⁰, the main school in the Thônes area. A member of the Académie Salésienne and well versed in local history, he published a lengthy history of Thônes in 1925, followed by a history of the parishes of the Thônes valley, in 1942-43. Although the substantial (40-page) chapter on the events of 1793 in the first work does not add anything new to our understanding of the topic, it is solid, well organized and referenced, providing a valuable introduction to the matter in hand (to such an extent that it features largely in the Wikipedia page on Marguerite Frichelet-Avet. As such it is an interesting piece of work, even if it adopts an apologetic stance and restricts itself to an account that avoids any form of *problématique*. Above all Pochat-Baron interrogated 'Yesterday and today in the life of Thônes' in a subsequent work. He observed that, descending directly from the past, the 'faith of our fathers' (as the saying goes) had held fast despite the disregard for religion decreed by government (Pochat-Baron, 1925-1, p. 464). To back up his point he cited an inscription in the largest bronze church bell: '*Thonenses semper deo fidelis*'. He also explored the idea of a population of independent spirit. They were quite prepared, as in 1860, to become French, but upholding the established order, retaining their rights and interests, fierce opponents of any radical or extremist policy hostile to religion (...). In political terms they were the 'Bretons of Savoy', in other words obstinately attached to their ancient traditions and impossible to convert to the party of evil (Pochat-Baron, 1925-2, p. 465). These characteristics, which the good canon attributed to the people of Aravis, and the comparison with Brittany (to be taken broadly as signifying western France, the seat of resistance to the Revolution) mapped out a form of geographical and historical particularity, in short a 'temperament'.

- 10 The concept of temperament was in vogue at the time. It started with *Le Tableau politique de la France de l'Ouest sous la Troisième République*, by André Siegfried, published in 1913²¹. It overlapped with several disciplines and geographers made the best use of it. The Vidal school of geography²² was then at its high point, determined to go beyond simple description and really explain, keen on fieldwork and figures, but also with its barons and their monographs. This regional geography, a science of complexity (Vidal de la Blache, 1914, p. 262), set about studying the French Alps under the energetic leadership of Raoul Blanchard, at the Institut de Géographie in Grenoble. Setting aside several monumental PhD theses, such as the one presented by André Cholley (Cholley, 1925) which mentioned Thônes, we have chosen to focus on a shorter, denser text. It was one of the first articles by Paul Guichonnet, who would achieve considerable renown. At the time he was a pupil of Blanchard so the piece naturally found its place in the *Revue de Géographie Alpine*, in 1943 (Guichonnet, 1943, pp. 39-85). Transposing the investigative techniques of André Siegfried, whom he cited as a major reference in his introduction, he proposed to circumscribe 'political units' on the basis of general election results in Haute Savoie in 1877-1936. He charted the percentage of left and rightwing votes in the various polls, ultimately yielding a map of 'the basic political temperament', then used to confront geographical and political areas (Guichonnet, 1943, p. 40). He cited various factors to explain why the left was well established in the valleys, whereas the right held fast in its mountain strongholds: land ownership, type of farming, contact with the outside world,

rural exodus, dominant economic activities (crop-farming, stock-raising and dairy, forestry, industry). Our purpose is not to criticise the inevitably dated work of the youthful Guichonnet, simply to take it as a milestone in Thônes memory. So what did he say about the locality? Describing the right in Haute Savoie as a whole, it seemed self-evident to him to start by citing Grand Bornand, and all the localities in the Thônes syncline as a rightwing stronghold (Guichonnet, 1943, p. 43). He linked this longstanding, rightwing political identity to religious practice, underpinned by strict Catholicism and a characteristic highland economy. Each massif formed a sort of fortress and its remotest valleys were the most secure rightwing dens (Guichonnet, 1943, p. 63). Guichonnet went on to describe 1793 as a formative event. Capable of passionate behaviour the people of the upper Borne valley asserted their convictions at the time of the separation of church and state, and even more forcibly in an armed uprising rejecting the Convention in 1793. This revolt, triggered by fresh taxes and above all religious persecution, was crushed, after fierce resistance by the peasant farmers of the valley, mobilized by a energetic young woman. Marguerite Frichelet, a Savoy version of Jeanne Hachette, and the leaders of the movement were executed by firing squad in Annecy (Guichonnet, 1943, p. 71). He then quoted Pochat-Baron and his Savoy Bretons, concluding that the right corresponded to the natural state of affairs in Haute Savoie, whereas the left was a recent import. Lastly without professing excessive determinism, one has to admit that geographical phenomena do impose fairly narrow bounds on voters, reining in their 'freedom of choice' and fantasy more tightly than they realise (Guichonnet, 1943, p. 85). We have thus come quite a long way from the picturesque descriptions of a travel guide. University study serves to secure scientific legitimacy, even if this is not the author's aim, unequivocally adopting an analytic approach. Such research contributes to a form of recognition of the gravity of an event, which local people had refused to forget, to such an extent that it was handed down from one generation to the next.

- 11 We may safely posit that Guichonnet's work may have helped to 'cool' a long incandescent memory, though further research would be needed to endorse or invalidate this assumption. To do so would require detailed investigation to determine whether the Thônes revolt and La Frichelette were ever used subsequently. What we do know is that on the 150th anniversary of the uprising, on 4 May 1943, two men raised Allied flags in the centre of Thônes in provocation of the Italian occupation forces²³ (Barbier, 2014, p. 29). But what followed? During the post-war boom years, with the focus on growth and leisure, local Roman Catholic identity was diluted. Meanwhile the tragic episode of the Glières maquis [brutally crushed in March 1944] had taken exclusive hold of the collective memory, with a cemetery at Morette and a memorial on the plateau. The make-up of the population changed too, with the upheaval of May 1968 – the 'second French Revolution' in the words of Henri Mendras – and the next two decades – Jean-François Sirinelli's 'vingt décisives' – through rural exodus and above all the influx of 'new blood', with a population of neo-Savoyards stripped of any geographically conditioned reflexes (Berthier, 2009, p. 541). In the town of Thônes alone the population rose from 2,841 at the 1962 census to 6,020 in 2012. All this might suggest that Marguerite Frichelet-Avet could rest in peace. In fact the militants of a new struggle, the Savoisien [liberation] movement have recently resuscitated her. La Frichelette has become the focus of springtime celebrations, which have attracted little public or media interest, but a certain amount of visibility thanks to social media²⁴. In May 2010 someone bolted a plate to the bridge at Dingy, bearing the following text: 'In homage to M. Frichelet-Avet. Executed on 18 May 1793 by the French Republic for organizing resistance in Thônes. The women of Savoy

hail her courage.’ A similar panel appeared on Place du Pâquier in Annecy in May 2015: ‘Here on 18 May 1793 the French revolutionaries shot Marguerite Frichelet-Avet, a Savoy resistance fighter, who had the massive courage to stand up to the invader of Savoy. Passer-by, remember.’ In both cases we may note the use of the sacrificial turn of phrase typical of French Resistance memorials, an indication of how different this is from La Frichelette of 1906, whom Aravis people remembered in their prayers and whose phantom was not as frightening as all that. It is still too soon to say what may become of her in their new Savoisien garments.

- 12 Ultimately we can only measure the importance of the awful events of May 1793 if we take a long view. By sustaining the memory of a Savoy Vendée and La Frichelette for so many years, the people of the Thônes area defined themselves, resolutely upholding a conservative identity, in defiance of anything from the outside that might impinge on their Roman Catholic highland habitus. Haute Savoie being less geographically uniform than neighbouring Savoie, this state of affairs consolidated a tradition of isolation, no doubt encouraged by the institutional mimicry inspired by nearby Switzerland, even if the yearning for provincial autonomy has never been comparable to the self-government granted to Swiss cantons (Berthier, 2009, p. 536). The brief conflict of 1793 was decisive for the Thônes area, prompting it to adopt, quickly and for a long time, a singular identity, stirring the curiosity of visitors and scholars who happened to observe this little *Sonderweg*. Contrary to a trend which deliberately favoured innovation, heritagization of the conflict fuelled for many years what some might dismiss as tension hinging on identity, whereas others might see it as loyalty to their land and forebears. So to what extent did this slow down what for many years was referred to as ‘progress’? Any answer would need to strike a balance between the strains of cultural and political tradition outlined above, and those, no doubt less evident, of the economic modernity of a small locality which nevertheless took advantage of hydro-electric power in the same way as other parts of the Alps (Altermatt, 1994)²⁵, or for that matter as parts of western France²⁶, which at various points in their history adapted to change. But an undertaking of this sort, reaching far beyond the scope of a single paper, would need to draw on a wide range of studies of local history and geography. Be that as it may, returning yet again to the Bretons of Savoy dear to Pochat-Baron, we can only imagine what might have come of an ethnographic study of Thônes along similar lines to the one carried out by Pêr-Jakez Hélias in the 1960-70s in his Pays Bigouden homeland [southern Finistère, Brittany], and dream of a *Cheval d’Orgueil* for the Aravis highlands.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Altermatt U., 1994.– *Le catholicisme au défi de la modernité. L’histoire sociale des catholiques suisses aux XIX^e et XX^e siècles*, Payot, Lausanne, 395 p.
- Andrieu C., 2004.– « Révolution française dans le débat politique » in Jean-François Sirinelli (dir.), *Dictionnaire historique de la vie politique française au XX^e siècle*, PUF, Paris.
- Barbier C., 2014.– *Le maquis des Glières. Mythe et réalité*, Perrin, Paris, 466 p.

- Berthier B., 2009.- « Circonscription administratives (après 1860) » in Christian Sorrel (dir.), *La Savoie et l'Europe 1860-2010. Dictionnaire historique de l'Annexion*, La Fontaine de Siloé, Montmélian.
- Bogey C., 2009.- « Récits et guides de voyage (après 1860) » in Christian Sorrel (dir.), *La Savoie et l'Europe 1860-2010. Dictionnaire historique de l'Annexion*, La Fontaine de Siloé, Montmélian.
- Cholley A., 1925.- *Les Préalpes de Savoie (Genevois, Bauges) et leur avant-pays. Etude de géographie régionale*, Armand Colin, Paris, 756 p.
- El-Gammal J., 2008.- « la Révolution française : mémoire et controverses » in Pascal Blanchard et Isabelle Veyrat-Masson (dir.), *La guerre des mémoires. La France et son histoire*, La Découverte, Paris.
- Godineau D., 2004.- « De la guerrière à la citoyenne. Porter les armes pendant l'Ancien Régime et la Révolution française », *Clio. Femmes, Genre, Histoire*, n° 20.
- Guérin J-P., 2009.- « Tourisme » in Christian Sorrel (dir.), *La Savoie et l'Europe 1860-2010. Dictionnaire historique de l'Annexion*, La Fontaine de Siloé, Montmélian.
- Guichonnet P., 1943.- « La géographie et le tempérament politique dans les montagnes de la Haute Savoie », *Revue de Géographie Alpine*, vol. 31, n° 1, pp. 39-85.
- Guide vert Michelin, 1959.- *Alpes. Savoie. Dauphiné*, Paris.
- Lagrée M. (dir.), 1998.- *Chocs et ruptures en histoire religieuse. Fin XVIII^e-XIX^e siècles*, PUR, Rennes, 228 p.
- Lagrée M., Roche J., 1993.- *Tombes de mémoire*, Ed. Apogée, Rennes, 148 p.
- Magnin C-M. (Mgr), 1879.- *La guerre de Thônes d'après les documents les plus authentiques*, F. Abry, Annecy, 58 p.
- Mayeur J-M., 1966.- « Religion et politique : géographie de la résistance aux inventaires (février-mars 1906) », *Annales ESC* n°6, pp. 1259-1272.
- Mayeur J-M., 2005.- *La séparation des Églises et de l'État*, Les Éditions de l'Atelier, Paris, (réédition du « classique » de 1966), 255 p.
- Nicolas J., 1989.- *La Révolution française dans les Alpes. Dauphiné et Savoie*, Privat, Toulouse, 380 p.
- Palluel-Guillard A. (et alii.), 1986.- *La Savoie de la Révolution à nos jours*, Ouest France, Rennes, 619 p.
- Pochat-Baron F., 1925.- *Histoire de Thônes*, tome 1 et 2, Mémoires et documents de l'Académie Salésienne, Annecy.
- Raverat A., 1872.- *Haute-Savoie, promenades historiques, pittoresques et artistiques en Genevois, Semine, Faucigny et Chablais*, Lyon, 672 p.
- Rosa M., 2003.- « Juridictionnalisme » in Philippe Levillain (dir.), *Dictionnaire historique de la Papauté*, Fayard, Paris.
- Sorrel C., 1995.- *Les catholiques savoyards. Histoire du diocèse de Chambéry 1890-1940*, La Fontaine de Siloé, Montmélian, 445 p.
- Sorrel C. (dir.), 2009.- *Servir la République. Députés et sénateurs. Savoie et Haute Savoie, 1871-1940*, La Fontaine de Siloé, Montmélian, 268 p.
- Vidal de la Blache P., 1914.- *Annales de Géographie*.
- Vovelle M., 2010.- « Révolution française » in Christian Delporte, Jean-Yves Mollier et Jean-François Sirinelli, *Dictionnaire d'histoire culturelle de la France contemporaine*, PUF, Paris.

Wey F., 1865.– *La Haute-Savoie : récits de voyage et d'histoire*, Hachette, Paris, 502 p.

NOTES

1. Savoy having been overrun by Revolutionary forces in 1792 and annexed from Piedmont.
2. On women's part opposing the Revolution, see Roger Dupuy, *Les Chouans*, Paris, 1997, pages 198-205.
3. This document has been abundantly cited, with or without a reference, by authors writing since the late-19th century, among others by canon Mercier of Annecy, the author of a monograph on the main town in Haute-Savoie: Jean Mercier, *Souvenirs historiques d'Annecy jusqu'à la Restauration*, Annecy, 1878, page 480.
4. The topic is still under study by the author of the present paper, as part of a PhD thesis in contemporary history supervised by Christian Sorrel, at LARHRA-Université Lyon 2, on Roman Catholic memory of the French Revolution in 19th century Savoy.
5. For all the key features of this major event, see Christian Sorrel (ed.), 2009.
6. In the last three decades of the 19th century, 'Large villages at medium altitude came to life thanks to the fashion for holidays in the mountain air: Abondance and Saint-Jean d'Aulps in Chablais, Tanninges, Samoëns and Faucigny, Le Grand Bornand, La Clusaz and Thônes in the Bornes valley, in André Palluel-Guillard (et alii), 1986, page 260.
7. On this book and its author, see Annick Rey-Bogey 'La Haute-Savoie (Francis Wey)' in Christian Sorrel, 2009, pages 592-595.
8. For example depending on whether or not she was a nun. In some cases the account may be enhanced with dramatic details – generally imaginary – but of which one may say, *se non è vero è ben trovato!*
9. This comparison, which came to be taken as self-evident, allows for a difference of degree with regard to Vendée, but not a difference of nature. Despite the renewed historical interest prompted by the Bicentenary in 1989, little fresh light has been cast on this issue.
10. Ultimately the Espace Muséal de Thônes reopened on 21 May 2016 (editor's note).
11. www.mairie-thones.fr.
12. Christian Sorrel (ed.), 2009, *ibid.*
13. We might compare this with Claude Petitfrère, 'Angers, 1906: la presse et les inventaires', *Annales de Bretagne*, 1979, pages 59-82.
14. Conservative periodical published in Haute-Savoie in 1879-1914. Available for further reading at www.memoireetactualite.org.
15. The pseudo report is signed 'un contrefort de La Tournette'. This hill stands between Thônes and Lake d'Annecy. Contrefort, which at first sight might mean foothill, is probably a pun, as in 'con très fort', or a very smart prankster ...
16. *L'Indicateur de la Savoie*, n°1386 (Saturday 17 February 1906).
17. However we should point out that the expulsion of the seven Capuchin friars from La Roche sur Foron on 25 April 1903 caused such uproar that the same Prefect deployed 12 brigades of gendarmes, two companies of foot soldiers and a cavalry squadron!
18. Biographic note in Christian Sorrel (ed.), *La Savoie*, Paris, Beauchesne, coll. *Dictionnaire du monde religieux dans la France contemporaine*, volume 8, 1996, page 274 et 275.
19. Biographic note in Christian Sorrel (ed.), 1996, page 337.
20. Of the thousands of pupils educated here we may cite the winner of the Nobel prize for Literature in 2014, Patrick Modiano. Unfortunately for our purposes, his account of his time at Saint-Joseph's, in 1960-62, makes no mention of La Frichelette ... Patrick Modiano, *Pedigree*, Paris, Gallimard, 2005.

21. Vidal de La Blache hailed this work as 'An excellent instance of the contribution geographical method may make to the study of matters of sociology and politics', *Annales de Géographie*, 1914, pages 261-264.
 22. Led by Paul Vidal de la Blache (1845-1918), founder of *Les Annales de Géographie*.
 23. This anecdote was taken from the preface of a short book on the 1793 revolt, published in 1948, and cited by François Cochat, who started the museum in Thônes.
 24. Just enter 'pont de Dingy' under Google Images, for ample examples ...
 25. In his review Michel Lagrée points out that 'the Catholic rural cantons, most of which were deeply embedded in the Alps, as well as isolated spots near Fribourg and in northern Jura (...) all resembled Vendée or Quebec, reminiscent of many things to a reader from western France' (*Annales de Bretagne et des Pays de l'Ouest*, 1994, volume 101, number 4, page 119).
 26. Coinciding with the emergence and deployment of pervasive industry in the countryside. For a historical approach, see Jean-Clément Martin, *Le clergé vendéen face à l'industrialisation (fin XIX^{ème} - début XX^{ème})*, *Annales de Bretagne et des Pays de l'Ouest*, 1982, volume 89, number 3, pages 357-368. For a geographical approach see the many publications by Jean Renard, notably *Les Évolutions contemporaines de la vie rurale dans la région nantaise : Loire-Atlantique, bocages vendéens, Mauges, Les Sables-d'Olonne*, 1975. For a more personal approach, see the graphic novel by Etienne Davodeau, *Les mauvaises gens*, Paris, 2005.
-

ABSTRACTS

From the early-19th century to the 1960s Thônes, in the Aravis massif, was known as a strongly Conservative, Roman Catholic area, following tragic events during the French Revolution. In May 1793 local people revolted against the recently instated Republican authorities. It soon became the 'Savoy Vendée', staying that way for many years, its memory perpetuated alongside that of its heroine, La Frichelette, executed by firing squad. Her fate, since her death, reveals a commemorative dynamic, with popular and scholarly roots, which has sustained deep-rooted mistrust of novelty and outside changes.

INDEX

Keywords: Savoy, French Revolution, memory, Roman Catholicism